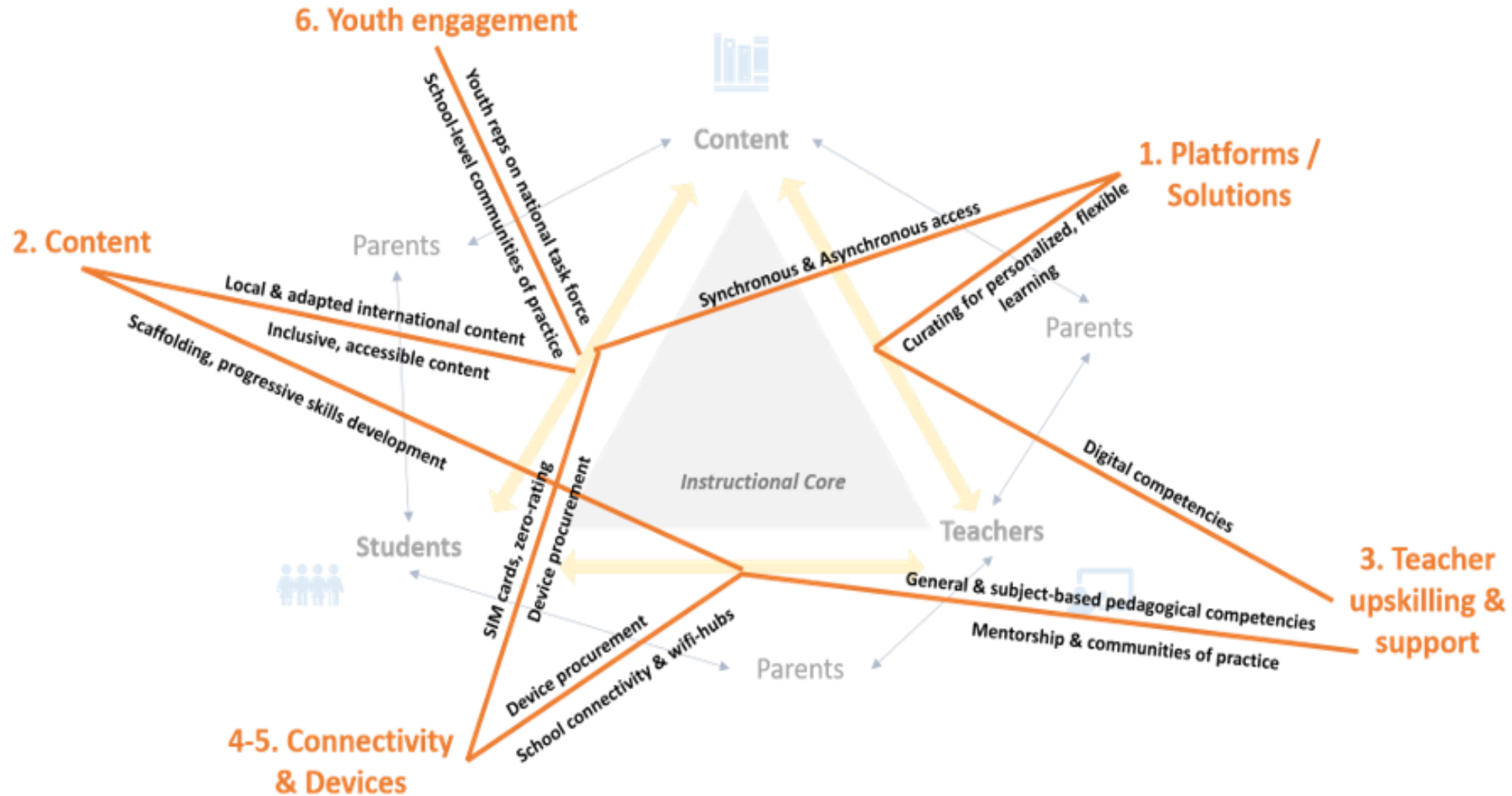# Accelerating Digital Transformation of Education Systems in the Western Balkans

UNICEF Updates

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Digital transformation of education - VISION

6. Youth engagement

Youth reps on national task force
School-level communities of practice

2. Content

Local & adapted international content
Inclusive, accessible content
Scaffolding, progressive skills development

Content

Synchronous & Asynchronous access

1. Platforms / Solutions

Curating for personalized, flexible learning

Parents

Instructional Core

SIM cards, zero-rating
Device procurement

Students

Teachers

Digital competencies

3. Teacher upskilling & support

General & subject-based pedagogical competencies
Mentorship & communities of practice

Device procurement
School connectivity & wifi-hubs

Parents

4-5. Connectivity & Devices

UPDATES FROM WESTERN BALKANS

How has the EU-UNICEF partnership supported education systems, teachers, parents and children in adapting education to the new realities and what has changed?

To support remote and online learning, UNICEF Regional office developed the Educators' Digital Competency Framework (EDC). It was developed to support education stakeholders in empowering teachers, improving online teaching and boosting innovation in education. Based on the EDC framework, the Regional Office **launched five training packages that promote inclusive, digital and blended learning**. Each training package includes a module, a manual for teacher trainers and a digital interactive course that could be easily integrated into national platforms to support the development of educators' digital-pedagogical competencies.

Access to learning for **students with disabilities and learning difficulties** has been improved in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and North Macedonia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 67 schools were equipped with sets of assistive technology. In Montenegro, children with speech difficulties were supported with the donation of tablets equipped with equipped with C-Board, communication application. Teachers, speech therapists, special education professionals and parents in North Macedonia have been trained on using alternative and augmentative communication to support the development, early inclusion and education of children with complex communication needs.

Introducing **digital technologies into teaching and learning became part of official government policy** in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. In Montenegro, the Education system digitalization strategy (2022-2027) and Standards for Quality and Inclusiveness of Digital Textbooks and Interactive Materials were developed and adopted by the Government of Montenegro and the National Council for Education, while in North Macedonia, newly developed interactive digital textbooks became available to students free of charge, while teachers have begun utilising a digital platform for crowdsourcing and sharing quality teaching materials with other educators. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guidelines for blended and online learning were developed.

Thousands of teachers and educators **upgraded their teaching skills by using digital tools in education** and methods of inclusive pedagogy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and North Macedonia due to extensive capacity building activities.

UPDATES FROM WESTERN BALKANS

Digital learning landscape in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, and North Macedonia: A policy analysis draft

The report captures the state of the education recovery after the COVID-19 school closures and strives to understand trends, promising practices, challenges, and gaps in digital learning systems and policies. Based on the good practices and gaps identified, the report recommends that:
1) Comprehensive policy frameworks for inclusive digital learning ecosystems are further developed
2) Additional measures are adopted to safeguard educational equity, quality, and inclusion, and quality education for all children.
3) Countries continue efforts to align pre-service and in-service teacher training with requirements of the digital transformation, and
4) Collaboration and exchange between teachers, learners, parents, and other stakeholders involved in digital learning is enhanced.

- **Transforming Education in Kosovo* with the Learning Passport - the case of Shkollat.org: Policy Brief**

    This brief presents the key lessons learnt and remaining gaps from Kosovo*'s experience with implementation and scaling-up of Shkollat.org – the localized version of the Learning Passport. The paper recommends the following policy steps to strengthen the digital learning ecosystem:
1) More efforts to promote the use of Shkollat.org
2) Developing more quality content for the platform
3) Developing structured and quality in-service teacher training programmes on digital learning that allow teachers to learn at their own place.
4) Strengthen connectivity infrastructure in schools and develop guidelines for managing technology in the classroom
5) Expand access to devices, especially among vulnerable youth
6) Coordinate and monitor digitalization efforts for successful implementation.

UPDATES FROM WESTERN BALKANS

- **Integrating EdTech into Teaching and Learning: Lessons from EDUINO in North Macedonia**

  This research synthesizes lessons from the experience of implementing the EDUINO digital learning platform in North Macedonia. The aim of the brief was to inform governments that are developing digital learning systems. The brief identified the following key levers that enabled the rapid development and scale-up of the EDUINO platform:

1) Developing and crowdsourcing curriculum-aligned learning content
2) Fostering user engagement through a community of practice
3) Furthering teacher capacity for digital learning
4) Reaching students with disabilities and other learning barriers

- Digital learning in the Western Balkans – Building on lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic: a cross-country brief draft

The report strives to provide pointers for how can countries in the Western Balkans build on their online learning experiences during school closures to create digital learning systems that can be leveraged to make learning more engaging and individualized. It presents the following strategies to achieve this:

1) Emboldening and monitoring implementation of digital and blended learning at the school-level;
2) Strengthening communication and advocacy efforts to get stakeholders on-board with digital and blended learning;
3) Piloting digital learning initiatives before them scaling-up;
4) Leveraging digital learning platforms to deliver teacher training;
5) Providing students in need with sufficient access to devices, connectivity and student support.

Advancing digital transformation -Ways forward

Thank you.

For more information:

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